

Cabinet-Level Department of Homeland Security Proposed by President

On June 6, President Bush proposed the creation of a Cabinet post for homeland security that would encompass a large amount of federal agencies, including Customs, Immigration, the Secret Service, and the Federal Emergency Management Agency. Secretary Thompson sent a letter to all Health and Human Service Department employees about the proposed department. Among other things, Secretary Thompson noted, "The President's plan, by and large, incorporates the bioterrorism response and preparedness function of the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) into the Department of Homeland Security. At this point, we know that the creation of this new department will affect 300 jobs and about \$4 billion of our budget at HHS and its agencies. It will most directly affect CDC, NIH, OPHP, and OEP." President Bush's complete 28-page report/proposal is posted at www.nasemsd.org, along with a diagram of federal agencies affected by the proposal.

State Homeland Security Directors Contact Information Available

Contact information for each State Homeland Security Director is now available on the Internet. To see the list, visit www.whitehouse.gov/homeland/contactmap.

Bioterrorism Bill includes AED Provisions

On May 23, the Senate passed the Conference Report of the Federal bioterrorism bill (H.R. 3448), devoting \$4.6 billion for stockpiling vaccines, improving food inspections, boosting security for water systems, and hospital preparedness. The Conference Report includes nearly all of the provisions in the Community Access to Emergency Defibrillation Act, authorizing \$30 million in year one for the AED provisions. Among other things, the Act provides grants for purchase and placement of AEDs in public places where cardiac arrests are likely to occur; train and equip first responders to administer immediate care; and encourage private companies in communities to purchase AEDs and train employees. President Bush is expected to sign the bill into law.

HRSA EMS and Trauma Program not in President's 2003 Budget Request

The National Trauma/EMS Systems Program within the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA), which works to support statewide trauma system development within States' EMS systems, will expire on November 1, 2002, if it does not receive funding in 2003 appropriations. Currently, the program is funded at \$3.5 million. Despite the efforts of HRSA, the President's Budget Request for FY 2003 contains no funding for the program. The Coalition for American Trauma Care and the American College of Surgeons support the program and urge those who value the program to contact members of Congress immediately.

HHS Approves State Bioterrorism Plans

On June 6, HHS Secretary Thompson approved comprehensive state plans to build stronger public health systems and better prepare for bioterrorism, marking the first time that federal, state and local governments have created a unified plan for responding to public health emergencies resulting from terrorism. With full approval of their plans, states, territories and municipalities receive the remaining 80 percent of their share of nearly \$1.1 billion in bioterrorism grants and can begin building stronger public health

systems, covering the spectrum from stronger disease surveillance to better-prepared hospitals. In January, President Bush signed into law a bioterrorism appropriations bill that sent \$1.1 billion to 62 states, territories and three major cities to strengthen local capabilities to deal with public health emergencies related to terrorism. Over the past month, HHS experts have reviewed and approved the majority of each plan. Twenty-four states and two cities had their plans fully approved. Twenty-four states and one city had most of their plans approved but with some funds withheld pending further review or refinement. And, two states, Washington, D.C., and all eight U.S. territories were given an extension for their plans. Information on each state is available at www.hhs.gov/news/press.

Medical Reserve Corps Recruiting Volunteers Now

The Bush Administration is planning to announce the formation of a Medical Reserve Corps (MRC) to coordinate the skills of practicing and retired physicians, nurses and other health professionals who are eager to volunteer during emergency situations. The MRC will “provide communities with medical volunteers who can assist health professions during a large-scale emergency”. A national announcement is planned for later this month. Information is currently available at www.citizencorps.gov/medical.

Farm Bill includes Rural Policy and Firefighter Training Provisions

On May 13, President Bush signed into law the “Farm Bill” (H.R. 2646) that will continue funding for agricultural programs through fiscal year 2007. This new law contains grant programs for local units of government and Indian Tribes to “pay the cost” of training firefighters and emergency medical personnel in firefighting, emergency medical practices and responding to hazardous materials and biohazards in rural areas. In addition, the new law urges the President to establish a Special Assistant for Rural Policy and to create an intergovernmental rural policy-working group.

New Legislation calls for Reimbursement of Certain Rural Hospital-Based Ambulance Services

On May 23, Senator Max Baucus (D-Mont.) introduced legislation (S. 2555) that would reimburse certain rural hospital-based ambulance services on reasonable costs instead of the fee schedule rates. The complete bill is available by visiting <http://thomas.loc.gov/>. Search for the bill summary using the legislation number. Analysis by the American Ambulance Association (AAA) indicates that the bill would assist only an extremely small section of the ambulance industry. AAA is working with members of Congress to provide relief to all providers for ambulance services with an additional modifier for those trips originating in a rural area.

Draft Ambulance Compliance Guidance released by Office of Inspector General

On June 6, the Office of Inspector General (OIG) issued a notice and opportunity for public comment on a draft compliance program guidance for the ambulance industry. The Federal Register notice provides 45 days for interested parties to submit comments on the draft guidance. According to AAA, the new element in the OIG guidance is its attempt to identify specific compliance risks associated with services covered under the Medicare program. In particular, the guidance attempts to take into account the new

requirements in the Medicare ambulance fee schedule, and to provide not only an interpretation of those requirements but also suggestions for ambulance suppliers to operate in compliance with the new requirements. The Federal Register notice is available at www.access.gpo.gov.

Grants available to Hospitals to Prevent injuries to Children

The Injury Free Coalition for Kids, a \$15 million national program of The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, is seeking proposals from hospitals that are pediatric trauma centers interested in replicating an injury prevention model, implemented in partnership with coalitions of community stakeholders. The program has been successfully used in 15 hospitals to date. Up to 13 four-year grants of \$200,000 (\$50,000/year) will be awarded in 2002. Up to 12 three-year grants of \$150,000 (\$50,000/year) will be awarded in 2003. Preference will be given to applicants from communities not currently served by the program. The deadline for receipt of the applications is August 1, 2002. For the full text of this Call for Proposals, including a list of the current sites, visit www.rwjf.org. Once at the site, click on "Applying for a Grant" then "Calls for Proposals". For application forms or additional information, visit the National Program office web site at www.injuryfree.org.

AHRQ Web Site Expanded to Help Diagnosis of Bioterrorism-Related Infections

A web site sponsored by the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ) is being expanded to help 265,000 primary care physicians across the country learn how to diagnose and treat rare infections and exposures to bioterrorist agents such as smallpox and anthrax. When it was launched in January, the Web site was the first of its kind to offer continuing education credits in bioterrorism preparedness to 50,000 hospital-based clinicians. An additional \$400,000 in funding is being made available to expand the Web site's educational modules and make them accessible to an additional 265,000 office-based internists, family physicians, pediatricians, and dermatologists, bringing to 315,000 the total number of clinicians who can use the site. There is currently no cost to take the courses and each offers one hour of continuing education credit. The web site address is www.bioterrorism.uab.edu.

National Clearinghouse for Maternal and Child Health Merges with HRSA Information Center

The Health Resources and Services Administration's (HRSA) National Maternal and Child Health Clearinghouse merged with the HRSA Information Center. Materials produced by all HRSA programs are now available from the HRSA Information Center. To order publications, contact the HRSA Information Center by phone, toll free, at 1-888-Ask-HRSA, by email at ask@hrsa.gov or visit the web site at www.ask.hrsa.gov. HRSA Information Center monthly email update, which contains a list of new publications, send an email to Maiser@circlesolutions.com with the phrase SUBSCRIBE HRSAINFOCENTER in the body of the message.

Government Agencies Launch New Health Care Quality Information Web Site

The Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ), the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS), and the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) jointly

launched a new web site designed to help benefit managers, consumer advocates, and state officials communicate with their audiences about health care quality. The site, www.talkingquality.gov, provides step-by-step instructions on how to implement a quality measurement and reporting project, such as a health plan report card. TalkingQuality.gov covers the entire process of quality reporting from initial planning to evaluation, with useful information for those both with and without experience in producing quality reports.

National Injury Center Releases State Injury Indicators Report

The National Center for Injury Prevention and Control at the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), with the ASTHO affiliate State and Territorial Injury Prevention Directors' Association (STIPDA) and the Council of State and Territorial Epidemiologists (CSTE), released the first "State Injury Indicators Report". The report presents 1997-1998 data gathered by 12 states that participated in a new program to track and monitor injuries and related factors. Data are reported for 11 of the 14 injuries and risk factors recommended for surveillance in STIPDA's 1999 "Consensus Recommendations for Injury Surveillance in State Health Departments". The report is available at www.cste.org.

Request for Information on Prehospital Care for Juveniles Exhibiting Mental or Behavioral Health Issues

Over the past couple of years, Washington State EMSC has focused on the mental health aspects of emergency care. Their first area of focus was hospital emergency departments and the care provided to juveniles presenting with mental health issues. They have completed preliminary research in that area and are now working on a demonstration project to address coordination between the emergency department and mental and behavioral health services. Preliminary research also is beginning to identify and explore concerns related to the delivery of prehospital care for juveniles that are exhibiting mental or behavioral health issues. Washington State EMSC would like to request help. If you have done research in this area, know about prehospital provider or dispatcher training programs that address this topic, or are familiar with effective programs for coordinating prehospital mental health care with mental health service providers, please contact Sheri Reder, Ph.D., MSPH at sreder@chmc.org.

National Hospital Ambulatory Medical Care Survey Available

The researchers at CDC's National Center for Health Statistics (HCHS) have released the 2000 National Hospital Ambulatory Medical Care Survey (NHAMCS) public use file, and the newest Advance Data report on emergency department visits during 2000. The NHAMCS is a national probability survey of hospital emergency and outpatient department conducted by NCHS. In the emergency department component, the survey samples medical records from about 400 nationally representative hospital emergency departments nationwide each year. Data elements include patient's age, sex, race, expected diagnoses, diagnostic services, procedures provided, medications, providers seen (including EMT), and disposition. The survey can shed light on the types of cases arriving via ambulance including who uses the EMS system, what problems they have, and what procedures they received in the emergency department. The new summary report for 2000 calendar year visits is available at www.cdc.gov.

AHRQ Report finds more than Half of Americans had no Problem getting Care when needed

About 54 percent of Americans ages 18 and older who do not live in institutions or serve in the military reported that they always received urgent medical care as soon as they wanted it during calendar year 2000. The findings come from a new questionnaire incorporated into the Agency for Health Care Research and Quality's (AHRQ) Medical Expenditure Panel Survey, which collects data on health care utilization and access, health status and quality annually. Additional findings of the survey are available at www.ahrq.gov/news/press.

Smallpox Information available on NASEMSD Web Site

The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation has shared a press release and PowerPoint presentation in relation to a Bob Blendon study funded by the foundation at the Harvard School of Public Health. The study surveyed the American public about their attitudes toward smallpox vaccine and smallpox preparedness. The survey mentions both state and local health departments and an interesting piece on who the public wants as their public health spokesperson. Press release and PowerPoint presentation are available to members on www.nasemsd.org.

International Data Sheet for Child Health Produced by Child Trends

The 1990 World Summit for Children set an agenda for countries to improve the lives of all children. The "Kids Count International Data Sheet" reveals progress in selected areas of well-being. It also shows that the unmet needs of children remain great, as do international disparities in how children are faring. The wall chart was produced by two U.S. research centers – the Population Reference Bureau and Child Trends – in collaboration with UNICEF. It presents the most current internationally comparable data available from UNICEF and other UN organizations for selected measures of child and maternal health, access to education, and teen birth rates. Copies of the publication are available at www.kidscount.org, www.prb.org and www.childtrend.org.

Mass Casualty Management Conference Planned for November

The University of Georgia announces its third annual conference on mass casualty management. This year's conference is titled "Community Preparedness Playbook" and will take place on November 13, 2002. This conference will focus on the elements of a coordinated local disaster plan that will address events due to biological, chemical or nuclear terrorist attacks and natural disasters. It will include command, protocol, and the responsibilities of local agencies, hospitals and other medical units, volunteer organizations, businesses and others. Separate training modules will be available for some of these areas. This program will be held at the Georgia Center for Continuing Education in Athens, Georgia and be available by satellite and web cast. To receive more information, contact Richard C. Field at Dick_Field@gactr.uga.edu.

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